

Rigged Elections in West Bengal

Results of the recently concluded polls in different states of India show a 'sweeping victory' of the ruling Congress and the routing of all opposition parties in so far as election is concerned. There is no doubt that on the face of it the election results for the ruling Congress are spectacular. But it is becoming increasingly clear to our people that this 'victory' of the ruling Congress in some states, particularly in West Bengal, which is a stronghold of the left democratic forces with solid mass base and well-knit organisation, is not the result of popular swing in favour of the ruling Congress, as is being tried to be made out by interested circles, but had been manufactured by the ruling Congress party in active collaboration with the administration and the police through various corrupt practices and fascistic methods ranging from free use of black money received from big business to large-scale terrorization of voters and tampering of ballot boxes and ballot papers. In fact, elections in states like West Bengal had been entirely rigged.

This is evident from the mood of the people in the state. The people are not at all jubilant over the victory of the ruling Congress in the polls. At least there is no public expression of jubilation. Compare the present mood of the people with that in 1967 or 1969 when the Congress was defeated in the elections and you will mark the difference. In 1967 or 1969, literally speaking, the people became wild w at the defeat of their oppressor, the Congress. Expressions of spontaneous joy of the people were noticed at every corner of the state. Had the election results reflected genuine verdict of the people then this time also there would have been similar expressions of public jubilation in West Bengal. But instead of being jubilant over the victory of the Congress the people have become glum, as if a catastrophe has befallen them. Only the volunteers of the Youth Congress and Chhatra Parishad, the storm-troopers of the ruling Congress, are trying hard to keep up the show of public enthusiasm.

When Indira magic failed to cut any ice, unabashed exploitation of the Bangladesh issue could not change the anti-Congress feeling of the electorate in West Bengal and intelligence reports, as reported in the Press, more than once confirmed definite

defeat of the ruling Congress in elections in the state, a master plan was drawn up by top Congress leaders in close and secret co-operation with topmost administrative and police officers to anyhow procure victory in the polls for the ruling Congress in the state. With the passing of more and more days, we are getting further and further evidence, direct and circumstantial, of multifarious kinds of rigging that had been employed by the ruling Congress party in connivance with the administration and the police in a well-thought-out concerted plan. Some of the methods adopted by the ruling Congress to *anyhow* win the elections in West Bengal are described below.

First, **large-scale terrorization of voters.** Ruling Congress hoodlums armed with revolvers, pistols, guns, daggers and other deadly weapons forcibly prevented voters of villages traditionally known as strongholds of left democratic parties from coming out of their houses and casting their votes on the election day. Prior to this gangster method of mass terrorization on the election day, recourse to threat, intimidation, coercion, violent attacks and the kidnapping of candidates, their election and polling agents and election workers of left democratic parties, making free and fair election

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LEFT FRONT'S DECISION FOR BOYCOTTING W. B. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Sarbashri Jyoti Basu (CPM), Nihar Mukherjee (SUC), Makhan Pal (RSP), Sudhin Kumar (RCPI), Jyoti Bhattacharya (Workers' Party), Suhrid Mallick Chowdhury (MFB), Nirmalendu Mukherjee (Biplabi Bangla Congress) and Ashok Ghosh (F.B.) on behalf of the Left Front in West Bengal and the Forward Bloc, West Bengal State Committee, have issued the following Statement to the Press :—

"We have already stated our position in respect of the Assembly constituted through a so-called election, which was entirely rigged, in West Bengal. We are now in possession of further conclusive evidence of the many kinds of rigging that were employed by the ruling party, the administration and the police in a concerted plan. "Not content with constituting this type of legislature, the ruling party is now engaged in forcible capture of mass organisations of workers, peasants, youths,

students, etc. and large-scale threats and attacks on people in general and driving them out of their houses in presence of the police. It is clear that the ruling party's plan includes suppression of all opposition views and organisations.

"In this situation we have no other course than to express our protest by boycotting this rigged legislature. We urge upon the people to realise the gravity of the situation and stand united in order to build up struggles for restoration of democracy."

campaign by such parties absolutely impossible, had been resorted to by the ruling Congress, especially its youth and student wings, with the backing of the local police. Patharpratima, Kultali, Mathurapur, Kulpi are some of the constituencies, where our Party contested, which faced this fascistic terror and gangster method on a large

scale. These illegal activities on the part of the ruling Congress making free and fair election impossible were in due time brought to the notice of local police stations, concerned district magistrates, superintendents of police and returning officers, the I.G. of Police, the Chief Electoral Officer

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Recent Central Budget

That the recent Central Budget of 1972-'73 placed by the Union Finance Minister, Mr. Y. V. Chavan bears no indication of Congress (R)'s widely trumpeted slogan of 'garibi hatao' but on the contrary, deals another cruel blow on the livelihood of the common people, pushing them still further to complete economic ruination is admitted by all the opposition parties and forces, even including some members of Parliament of the ruling Congress (R).

There can be no doubt that the increased duty to be imposed as contemplated in the budget on such common items of consumption, such as kerosene, cigarettes, aluminium utensils, steel products, fertilisers, power-driven pumps, cement, etc., will inevitably push up prices of the daily necessities of life, resulting in further contraction of the purchasing power of the common people. That the stipulated amount of Rs. 183 crores to be mopped up through additional burden of taxation will primarily hit the poor and middle class people has a clear evidence in the fact that out of this amount of Rs. 183 crores, the Congress (R)-led Central Government has proposed to cover Rs. 143 crores through Excise Duty alone—a burden the traders and the big industrialists pass on to the consumers and even exploit this opportunity to earn greater profit than before out of it. Coupled with it, the uncovered gap of Rs. 242 crores as formulated in the budget will undoubtedly generate heavy inflationary tendencies hiking up prices of almost all commodities of daily use. The Congress (R)'s promise of bringing down the prices of essential commodities and improving the lot of the weaker sections of the community is nothing but mere bunkum and the recent Central budget is a clear testimony to this.

The second objective of the Congress (R) is to generate a self-reliant economy. Their aim is to consolidate the national economy on its own footing

without relying on foreign help. Such an assurance is nothing new from the Congress side. They have been saying so all along since independence. But it is strange to see that though Congress was saddled with absolute power both at the Central and in the State Governments, leave alone generating a self-reliant economy, it had itself surrendered the interests of national economy to the foreign imperialist powers, specially to the U.S. imperialists. It is by virtue of this Congress rule and pursuit of pro-imperialist policies that the burden of foreign debt has straitened the national economy to a position of virtual collapse. Not only the present Congress(R) rule is making no attempt whatsoever to rescue the Indian economy from this crippling situation but even more, through its agreement on 221 cases of foreign collaboration during a single year of 1970-'71, it has given wider opportunities to the foreign monopolists to rob our national wealth more ruthlessly and to have a firm grip over our national economy. It is noticed even in the present budget, that the much-proclaimed emphasis on self-reliant economy has been flung aside and Rs. 614'73 crores of foreign aid (a substantial part of it is coming from the U.S.A.—the bitterest enemy of our people) have been assumed in this budget which far exceed the amount of the last year. Is this a proof of Congress(R)'s genuine effort to develop a self-reliant national economy as advocated by them?

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By The Way

According to information furnished to the Lok Sabha, capital employed by three major oil companies including their refineries upto 31st December, 1969 was as follows: Burmah-Shell—Rs. 62'52 crores, Caltex—Rs. 16'9255 crores and Esso—Rs. 29'5840 crores. During 1967 to 1970 they transferred to their principals abroad on account of profits, dividends and remunerations Rs. 45'83 crores, Rs. 2.91 crores and Rs. 6'53 crores respectively. You call it loot and plunder by foreign finance capital! Nonsense. This is how our magician Prime Minister is building socialist pattern of society in our country

The **Economic Survey** 1971-72 shows that the rate of growth of national income has been steadily falling in these years from a little less than 5.5 per cent in 1969-70 to a little less than 5 per cent in 1970-71 and to about 4 per cent (anticipated) in 1971-72, despite rise in agricultural production. This fall is due to steady decline in the rate of growth of industrial production which, after recording an annual rate of growth of 6.4 per cent in 1968 and 7.1 per cent in 1969, came down to 4.8 per cent in 1970 and 2 per cent in 1971. This decline covers the entire range of industrial production and gives the lie to the propaganda that due to labour troubles fomented by left democratic parties industrial production is declining. For, this decline is not peculiar to India alone; it is marked in all the capitalist countries taken together. Average growth of industrial production in the capitalist world was 5.7 per cent during 1961-70, 3.4 per cent in 1970 and 2 per cent (estimated) in 1971. It goes without saying that the villain of the piece is capitalist economy itself which our magician Prime Minister is trying to defend with all her might.

Now that the general elections to the Legislative Assemblies of different states are over, it is not necessary any more for the ruling Congress to play upon the genuine anti-US feeling of the people in our country. So, President V. V. Giri in his address to Parliament said: "It gives us hope that our relations with the United States of America based on mutual respect and understanding will not be allowed to deteriorate." This is **real politik** of the ruling Congress brand.

Mr. Mohan Kumaramangalam, one-time CPI leader and now Union Minister for Steel and Mines, advised the CPI to take a lesson from the defeat of the DMK and withdraw "in time" their support to the Coalition Government in Pondicherry in conformity with the all-India policy of the CPI as a Congress ally. The CPI promptly responded to this advice by formally withdrawing from the DMK-CPI coalition in Tamilnadu. Don't blame the CPI. What can they after all do when the lord and master orders in the form of advice something to be done.

Mr. K. R. Ganesh, Union Minister for revenue and Expenditure, informed the Rajya Sabha that wealth tax assessment cases against members of the Birla family, which were reopened, had been withdrawn. False cases against poor peasants and workers cannot be withdrawn by the Congress governments but cases against the Birlas can be withdrawn. No wonder. This is Congress concept of social justice.

Tampering of Ballot Boxes and Ballot Papers—Main Method of 'Victory' Adopted by Congress

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of West Bengal, the Governor of the State and the Chief Election Commissioner. Such complaints were made not by our Party alone; other left democratic parties also brought similar charges against the ruling Congress and the police. The complainants were all responsible public men and leaders of recognised political parties. Democratic norms of behaviour demanded that such serious allegations by responsible leaders and public men should be inquired into. But not even a formal inquiry into the serious allegations was ordered. The administration sat tight over the matter and the terrorization by armed ruling Congress hoodlums continued unabated. It should be noted that this fascistic method of threat, intimidation, coercion and violent attacks by the ruling Congress obstructing left democratic parties in carrying on election campaign and approaching voters and preventing voters from exercising their right of franchise was not limited to a few pockets or to the four constituencies mentioned above where we contested. It had been widely practised.

Second, forcible Occupation of polling booths. The second method adopted by the ruling Congress to procure 'victory' in the polls in West Bengal was forcible capture of polling stations and fake voting. In a large number of constituencies hoodlums of the ruling Congress armed with revolvers, guns and other deadly weapons entered polling stations, made the police-men posted there stand just like dolls, captured booths, forced the polling personnel to keep mum, snatched away ballot papers from them, stamped on the Congress symbols on those ballot papers, put those ballot

papers into ballot boxes and compelled presiding officers to seal those ballot boxes. Here within two to three hours the voting was over. In some such cases cent percent voting had been recorded and that too within two to three hours. Constituencies in urban and industrial areas had mostly been affected by this method. In these constituencies the ruling Congress had 'received' record votes and 'won' the election by unbelievably big margins. To mention only a few, by 76,000 as in Dum Dum, by 61,000 as in Kalna, by 59,000 as in Nadanghat, by 48,000 as in Manteswar, by 47,000 as in Panihati, by 41,000 as in Memari, by 39,000 as in Baranagar, by 39,000 as in North Beliaghata, by 28,000 as in South Burdwan, etc., etc. It should be noted that these are traditional left constituencies wherefrom candidates of left democratic parties had been returned all these years. Can any sane and sensible man deny that in all these constituencies elections had been a complete farce. Some of the Congress leaders and workers are heard to observe that they had paid the CPI(M) in their own coins in these constituencies. Is it not an admission that elections in West Bengal had not been free and fair and that they had been rigged by the ruling Congress in connivance with the administration and the police? Even if it is assumed for the sake of argument that the ruling Congress had paid the CPI(M) in the latter's coins in these constituencies numbering about fifty, does it justify the rigging of elections done by the Congress? Does it not strike at the very root of free and fair election and of parliamentary democracy? Is not this fascistic method adopted by the ruling Congress to **anyhow** win elections in West Bengal creating objective grounds

for fascism to entrench itself in power in our country?

Third, appointment of rabid pro-Congress elements as polling personnel. Previously presiding and polling officers used to be appointed from government employees and officers. This time a thorough screening had been made and mostly pro-Congress government employees and officers and teachers had been appointed as polling personnel, so that they could do their best in furthering interests of the ruling Congress during the election at the polling stations. To suit this interest of the Congress, about 800 presiding and polling officers, who had already been appointed as such to different polling stations, when reported for duty at their respective places for reporting, were curtly told that their appointment had been cancelled. They were not reserve hands or stand bys. This unusual step was taken to make sure that only pro-Congress elements could be appointed as presiding and polling officers.

Fourth, tampering of ballot boxes and ballot papers. The ruling Congress leaders knew for certain that terrorization of voters and capture of polling booths by Congress hoodlums would not procure for the party absolute victory in elections in West Bengal. Intelligence reports (as published in Press and not yet contradicted) confirming defeat of the Congress made the top leaders of the ruling Congress apprehensive and they were wary of taking any risk. Hence, the necessity of drawing up the master plan secretly in connivance with topmost administrative and police officers was felt. And the plan for printing duplicate ballot papers and replacement of original ballot papers by these duplicate

ballot papers stamped in favour of the ruling Congress by tampering with sealed ballot boxes was adopted. This was the method by which the ruling Congress had won a large number of seats in the last general election in West Bengal. Our readers should not harbour the illusion that sealed ballot boxes cannot be opened without breaking the seals on them. Several years back it was practically demonstrated on the floor of Parliament that sealed ballot boxes could be opened and stamped ballot papers within them removed without breaking the seals on ballot boxes.

It is true that no body personally saw any tampering of ballot boxes and ballot papers being made by any person. But there are enough materials to prove that such things had taken place in the elections. We reproduce below some such circumstantial evidence. (1) Bunches of stamped ballot papers had been found strewn on roads, by river side and at other odd places. For example, in Suri constituency ballot papers with stamp marks on the symbol bicycle of our candidate, Com. Prativa Mukherjee, had been recovered from roads; ballot papers with stamp marks on the symbol bicycle of our Party candidate for Kulpi constituency had been found strewn by the bank of the river near Diamond Harbour. In other constituencies also this thing happened. These are not isolated cases of one or two voters taking away ballot papers outside polling stations. Such taking away is not possible now. Moreover why should voters take numbers of ballot papers stamped by them and throw them on streets without inserting them into ballot boxes? If they had no mind to vote, they would not have taken the trouble of going to polling stations, standing there in queue for hours together,

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Some Instances of Cong(R)'s Fascistic Attacks on Left Organisations

In another article published in this issue relating to the rigging of elections in West Bengal, we have observed that the ruling Congress not content with the rigging of elections and constituting the rigged Legislative Assembly and annihilating opposition by fraud within the legislature is out to destroy in a concerted plan opposition views and organisations outside. Reports of threats, and attacks on mass organisations of workers, peasants, youths, students etc. controlled by left democratic parties by the Congress hoodlums are pouring in daily. We cite some of the instances below.

In Patharpratima constituency, Congress hoodlums entered the house of Com. Abinash Nath at Srifaltala and assaulted him. In Mondalpara under the same constituency Congress hoodlums ransacked the houses of supporters of our Party. Our Party office at Raidighi had been forcibly taken possession of by the ruling Congress. Com. Rabin Pramanick, one of our workers at Kharapara had been seriously assaulted and forced on point of gun to leave his house. Com. Nitai Maity of Paschimpara, another worker of our party had been seriously assaulted. Com. Arabinda Tanti of Baradanagar had been assaulted severely. The Congress miscreants took away Com. Tanti's three cows. Workers of Dighirpar Bakultala and Khari had been forced to leave their villages. These are not all but just a few instances of what is happening in Patharpratima constituency.

In Kultali constituency similar things are taking place. Organisers, workers and supporters of our Party in Debipur Bhubaneswari Anchal and Maipith Baikunthapur Anchal were forced to leave their villages before the election. After the results of the election, the Congress workers are entering each and every house of the workers and supporters of the Party in this area, forcing the men-folk to leave their houses or work for Congress and

insulting the women-folk. Com. Gaurhari Bera of Purba Gurguria had been forced to leave his village with the members of his family. The house of Com. Kedar Jana, another worker of the Party in the locality had been looted and his wife was severely assaulted at dead of night. On the next day when the son and daughter of Com. Kedar Jana were coming in a boat to give information to their father about this attack, they were kidnapped by the Congress hooligans. No trace of them could be found out as yet. A woman worker of our Party, had been forcibly taken by the Congress hooligans to the local Congress office. There she was detained throughout the night.

In Jaynagar constituency bombs were thrown at the houses of Com. Subodh Banerjee and Com. Sachin Banerjee by drunken Congress workers and supporters. Bombs were also thrown at the houses of Niranjana Ghosh, one of our supporters and Com. Narayan Bhadra, one of our organisers in Beliachandi by known anti-socials who are Congress workers there. At Mayahauri the workers of our Party are being chased. In Bamangachi Anchal, the Congress hoodlums had forcibly taken away a bicycle and wristwatch of one of our Party supporters. This has been done by one of the brothers of Congress candidate of Kultali constituency. In Hariharpara constitu-

ency under Murshidabad district, the Congressite jotedars are evicting bargadars who supported us in the election en masse. Here the defeated Congress candidate is openly declaring that Com. Raihan Biswas, our victorious candidate from Hariharpara will be killed.

Unprecedented large-scale eviction of bargaders from land is being made by the jotedars in almost every constituency where we contested. Suri, Murarai, Jangipur, Hariharpara, Patharpratima, Mathurapur, Kultali and Kulpi are some of the constituencies where attack is relatively more severe.

Police and the administration are working hand in glove with the ruling Congress in this fascistic onslaught on our Party. Hundreds of false cases are being instituted against the workers and supporters of our Party and Krishak-o-Khet Majdoor Federation by the Police at the instance of the local Congress leaders and Congressite jotedars.

The Congress leaders and Ministers here are making pulpit speeches, saying that they want peace, that they won't tolerate any violation

of the rule of law and take strong measures against any violent attack on the people and the workers of opposition parties, and that they would restore normal democratic atmosphere in the state. While this promise is being made by the leaders at the top the Congress workers at the bottom are carrying on fascistic attacks with impunity on workers and supporters of our Party and other left parties and common men, throwing to the winds all democratic norms and behaviour. If the Congress leaders and Ministers really mean what they are saying they should immediately stop these illegal criminal acts on the part of Congress workers and supporters, restore administrative neutrality at all levels, from the top to the lowest thana level, provide all scope to the opposition parties to carry on normal political activity freely and without obstruction and restore normal democratic atmosphere in the state. Unless these are done in reality their words will be taken as a subterfuge to carry on fascistic attacks by the ruling Congress workers on the opposition parties.

Cong(R)'s Way to End Foreign Investment !

Mr. B. B. Lall, Secretary to the Government of India for Industrial Development, at the meeting of the Indo-British Technological Group is reported by **The Economic Times** to have "offered Britain relaxation of regulations governing foreign private investments and agreed to allow even the setting up of new subsidiaries of British companies on the condition that 100 per cent of the goods manufactured by such companies will be exported." Thanks to Congress policy, foreign private investment in India now stands at Rs. 1137 crores as against about Rs. 250 crores in 1948. After the cordial invitation by Mr. Lall it will surely increase by leaps and bounds. After all this, one must not doubt about the sincerity of our Prime Minister and her Government to end exploitation of our country by foreign finance capital.

CENTRAL BUDGET

Congress (R)'s present dictatorial position both at the Centre and in the States will pave the way for socialism as claimed by it or compel the masses to face a hopeless situation of unthinkable hardship and poverty in days to come? Will the teeming toiling population of our

country and the vast intelligentsia respond to this brand of 'socialist' planning of the Congress (R) or they determine to come forward mobilising all their efforts to resist this anti-people budget of the Congress (R)—it is a question our people alone should decide sooner than later.

Anti-people Budget of the Cong(R)

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The third objective of the Congress (R) is growth in productivity with social justice. When the country is flooded with an ever-growing army of unemployed and under-employed people both in the urban and the rural sectors, when the profit-greed of the monopolists is unleashing price-spiral without any check, when the fiscal and monetary policies of the Congress (R) Government serving the interests of the monopolists are alarmingly boosting up prices of all essential commodities which in its effect is squeezing the purchasing power of the people, thus debilitating the industrial productive activity and bringing in recession with our economy plunging in a deeper crisis as time flows out the Congress (R)'s talk of economic recovery with social justice in the prevailing set-up when all these factors are kept alive and even sustained by it is nothing but a ruse to befool the masses. In the current budget not only there is a complete lack of any concrete proposal of the Congress (R) to revitalise our economy, but also the contemplated move of imposing a still more heavy dose of taxes on the common people and spending the greater part of the budget provision in non-developmental fields will actually push our country to further acute economic crisis. When such is the reality, the professed view of the Congress (R) for a growth-oriented economy with social justice is a clever subterfuge to disarm the masses. While in one voice the Congress (R) is speaking of social justice it is in the same voice it is threatening the democratic masses and their various organisations with its evil design to forcibly snatch away even the elementary rights of the people with a view to smash their organised movements on legitimate democratic demands. While the profiteers, the black-marketeers, the hoarders, the tax evaders are left scot free

to fleece our people more mercilessly, the starving common men of our country are loaded with heavier burden of taxes. While a huge amount is being spent and has also been earmarked in this budget on wasteful expenditure, no emphasis appears to have been given in the central budget to meet the basic needs of the people, such as to curb the rural and urban unemployment, to drive out mass illiteracy, to extend social amenities to the people, to stabilise prices of essential commodities, to bring about radical land reforms etc.. Even the small amount which is allotted in the Congress (R)'s budget for schemes towards the general welfare of the people cannot be spent fully for bureaucratic handling. Mr. Y. V. Chavan's own admission that out of Rs. 50 crores earmarked for a crash programme to fight out rural unemployment, only a small fraction of it of Rs. 3 crores could be spent during the last year is a tell-tale evidence of Congress (R)'s glaring incompetence to give some relief to the people. When such is the rule of the Congress (R) and such is their performance, its stated objective of economic growth with social justice as enunciated in the budget, sounds quite hollow to every reasonable mind in our country.

So when in so many words the Congress (R) has planned to plunge the wider sections of the people as evidenced in this budget into ever deepening economic crisis, when it is planned to further widen the economic disparity among the people and still more impoverish the starving millions of our country, when only the money bags, the big industrialists and other vested class of people are found to be the sole beneficiaries of this budget, and when only this exploiting section of the people and its representatives appear to be warmly greeting this budget, one is rather prone to ask whether the

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PRESS CLIPPING

The rules contained in the booklet "Instructions to Presiding Officers" published by the Election Commissioner clearly state that the Presiding officer must submit ballot paper account in Form no. 16 and his election diary, both in separate sealed covers, to be placed at the disposal of the Returning officer after the polling is over. Such a procedure has been followed even till the last election held in 1971. But in the recently held General Election in West Bengal, curiously it is noticed that such rules relating to the sealing of Election papers have been obviated even through specific instructions to the Presiding officers by the District Election officer. Here we reproduce a portion of the report published in **Satyajug**, a Bengali Daily in its issue dated 30th March 1972. (Translation in ours—Ed. P. E.)

".....It appears that this year the Presiding officers were given instructions not to seal these two valuable and important documents. In the booklet under the caption "Instructions to Polling Personnel—1972" published by the District Election office, Birbhum and bearing the signature of the District Magistrate who was also the District Election officer it had been specifically stated in the page 7 of the booklet that (c) There will be another separate cover which will contain the Ballot Paper A/c. (Form 16) only (d) There will be another separate cover containing the Presiding officer's Diary only. The covers mentioned at (c) and (d) are to be closed by pins and not by gum (not by gum had been underlined).

"According to some close quarters such an instruction for depositing the two valuable documents without being sealed had at its back an evil design to ensure manipulation of Ballot Paper A/c and tampering of Ballot Boxes. The Congress-C.P.I. combine secured the help of a section of Police and Administration to fulfil this heinous motive.

"It is also confirmed from some reliable sources that the D. M. of Birbhum had sent a Radiogram to the State Government to supply at least 4000 Ballot papers (Duplicate!) to be further despatched to each constituency of the district.

The officers and the employees who were sent to Calcutta from the district for bringing those Ballot Papers were expected to be back on 4th March last. But curiously, some of them were hand-picked who stayed back to bring the extra ballot papers and on 10th March last, at dead of night a high Government official handed over those Ballot Papers to two top leaders of the Congress and the CPI. Subsequently on 11th March after 1 P.M. those extra Ballot Papers were stamped on the symbol of 'cow and calf' or 'sickle and sheaf of paddy' according to requirement and inserted into the Ballot Boxes of different centres after breaking the Ballot Boxes. Even some high Police and Administrative officials were personally present to help carry out this fraud.

"In the early hours of 12th March last a high Police officer while giving advice to some left party leader to keep guard on the Ballot Boxes expressed something sinister about the whole affair which was quite apparent in the tone and manner of his advice. This fact also gives credence to the belief that the rigging was thoroughly done at dead of night on the preceding day (i. e. 11th March last).

"In fine, there is no doubt about the fact that much fraud has been widely practised in the matter of elections in the district of Birbhum."

Induction of Police to anyhow Procure 'Victory'

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putting thumb impressions or signatures and stamping the ballot papers. Unless ballot boxes had been tampered with and original stamped ballot papers within ballot boxes replaced by duplicate ballot papers in all haste, presence of large number of stamped ballot papers at odd places cannot be reasonably explained. (2) In some of the constituencies where we contested (for example, Chhatra, Raghunathpur) many ballot boxes when brought to counting tables were found to be without seals even though our polling agents for the polling stations concerned sealed the ballot boxes. It is not that our polling agents forgot to seal. They sealed the ballot boxes and mysteriously the seals disappeared. But there is no mystery in it. In these cases the tampering of ballot boxes had been done very clumsily by just breaking all the seals on them. The persons who had done this must be novice otherwise they should have known the art of opening sealed ballot boxes without breaking the seals on them. (3) In some other constituencies where we contested (for example, Para, Hura and Raghunathpur) ballot boxes for several polling stations bore sealing marked **SUC** even though the seals with mark **SUC** had been withdrawn by us two years back and our polling agents for the concerned polling stations did not use seals with **SUC** mark but used seals having marks of initials of one particular member of the Secretariat of the West Bengal State Committee of our Party. How can the appearance of this ghost seal be explained other than by the fact of tampering with ballot boxes? (4) Several ballot boxes for Murarai constituency where we contested when opened on counting tables were found to contain ballot papers with election symbol of the Congress (O) even though

there was no Congress (O) candidate at Murarai. In some ballot boxes for Rajganj constituency in Jalpaiguri district were discovered ballot papers for Tapan constituency in West Dinajpur district. Several ballot boxes for Balagarh constituency contained ballot papers for Chinsura constituency. Several ballot boxes for Dhakuria constituency had inside them ballot papers for Tollygunge constituency. These gross irregularities can only be explained by the fact that in hastily tampering with ballot papers they had been done. (5) In many ballot boxes for many constituencies 10 to 15 ballot papers had been found folded together or crumpled together. Such a thing is impossible in normal course of voting. It indicates that some outsiders must have inserted dozens of ballot papers all folded together in haste. (6) Ballot boxes for polling stations covering areas where the voters actively worked for our Party, resisted times without number violent attacks by Congress hoodlums and cast their votes in our favour coming in processions were found to contain ballot papers in favour of the ruling Congress alone. Among the constituencies where we contested such a thing happened fully or partially in Suri, Kultali, Mathurapur, Kulpi, Patharpratima, Jangipur, Murarai, etc. There is no reasonable explanation for it except the fact of tampering of ballot boxes and ballot papers. (7) There are innumerable cases where discrepancies between actual number of votes cast and the total number of ballot papers found in ballot boxes had been detected. For example, at booth No 65 of Domkal constituency 550 votes were actually cast but the ballot box when opened was found to contain 685 ballot papers.

All these facts conclusively establish that there

had been tampering of ballot boxes and ballot papers by the ruling Congress in connivance with the administration and the police in quite a large number of constituencies. Is it because the Congress candidates knew beforehand of such a plan of tampering with ballot boxes and ballot papers that their polling agents by and large did not seal ballot boxes this time? Is it because of the existence of such a plan of large-scale tampering with ballot boxes and ballot papers that presiding officers this time were instructed not to seal covers containing accounts of ballot papers and other election papers, an instruction never given on earlier occasions?

Fifth, manipulation of counting at the time of counting. It is to be noted that this time counting assistants and supervisors were mostly appointed from among those government employees and teachers who are known for their pro-Congress bias. These counting assistants and supervisors had done whatever was possible for them to do to inflate the votes of the ruling Congress and reduce the votes of left democratic party candidates. This had been done in various ways some of which are as follows. (1) In quite a large number of constituencies valid ballot papers cast in favour of candidates of left democratic parties had been made invalid by counting assistants by putting additional stamp marks on the symbols of other candidates on the ballot papers. For example, a counting assistant for Purbasthali constituency was found to wear on his thumb a rubber stamp with cross mark with which he made multiple markings on ballot papers cast in favour of the left candidate there. The very large number of invalid votes this time even in constituencies where the electorates are fairly educated explains this type of malpra-

ctice by pro-Congress counting assistants. Take for instance the case of Kamarhati constituency. Here the electorate consists predominantly of educated middle class people well-known for their anti-Congress stand all through. Here rejected votes numbered more than 16,000. (2) In some cases counting assistants placed ballot papers with marks on bicycle in bundles of ballot papers of Congress candidates. The mistake is not accidental. Deliberately this had been done. A bundle of fifty ballot papers in favour of the Congress candidate had been made with one ballot paper with marking on cow and calf symbol at the bottom, another similar ballot paper on the top packed with forty eight other ballot papers in between the two with markings on bicycle. This fraud by counting assistants to manipulate votes in favour of the ruling Congress candidate had been caught red handed by our counting agents several times in case of Patharpratima constituency. No one knows how many such bundles went undetected and swelled the votes of the Congress candidate. (3) In some other cases bundles of forty ballot papers were counted as bundles of fifty ballot papers in case of Congress candidates whereas bundles of sixty ballot papers were treated as bundles of fifty ballot papers in case of candidates of left democratic parties. As a result of this fraud the total number of ballot papers remained the same but at the same time votes in favour of the Congress had been inflated and that of left candidates reduced. It is not humanly possible to detect each act of such fraud. For, this time there were three counting assistants at each counting table who sorted and counted all at a time. It was not possible for one counting agent to keep an eye on the working of the three counting assistants at

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his table at the same time. Nevertheless some such malpractices by counting assistants had been detected.

It goes without saying that there were other kinds of rigging that had been employed by the ruling Congress party, the administration and the police in the polls in West Bengal. In many states police and intelligence organs were actively inducted into election campaign by the ruling Congress party. In West Bengal police officials openly canvassed for candidates of the ruling Congress, arrested on the eve of elections at the instance of Congress leaders and candidates thousands of workers and supporters of left democratic parties to prevent them from approaching voters and threatened them of serious troubles and dire consequences if they did not work for Congress candidates. In Suri the local police arrested one of our election workers on a false charge, kept him in Thana lock-up, at dead of night brought him out of the lock-up and in presence of the Congress candidate severely pressurized him to stop working for us and instead work for the Congress candidate, threatening him all the time of serious troubles in case he refused to work for the Congress. Such a grave violation of democratic norms and principles in general and of election laws in particular was brought to the notice of all concerned including the Chief Electoral Office of the State and the Chief Election Commissioner. But no action against the guilty police official was taken; not even a sham show of inquiry was ordered. And after all this the ruling Congress was eloquent on free and fair elections in West Bengal. There should be limit to one's impudence.

If the elections in West Bengal had been entirely

rigged then how could the left democratic parties united in the Left Front secure twenty seats? The bourgeois Press in general and Congress and CPI leaders in particular are raising this question to create confusion among the people. First of all some of these were unimportant seats, and the Ruling Congress took it for granted that they would win them. And so they did not rig the elections in them. The victory of the candidates of the left parties here indicates that the swing was in favour of the Left Front and not for the Congress. Furthermore, it should be realized that some of the twenty candidates of the Left Front had been returned not because there had been no rigging of elections by the ruling Congress, the administration and the police in their respective constituencies but because, in spite of such rigging they were victorious; votes they secured were beyond the calculations of the ruling Congress and far outnumbered the duplicate ballot papers inserted by the Congress, administration and police into ballot boxes by tampering with ballot boxes.

Not content with constituting rigged legislature and annihilating opposition parties within the legislature, the ruling Congress in West Bengal is now engaged in forcible capture of mass organisations of workers, peasants, youths, students, etc. controlled by left democratic parties. Large-scale threats and attacks on people in general are being resorted to, driving them out of their houses and localities. This shows that the ruling party's plan includes suppression of all opposition views and organisations.

In this situation no useful purpose can be served by our

participation in West Bengal Legislative Assembly. The West Bengal State Committee of our Party, therefore, in consideration of the futility of our participation in the State Legislative Assembly in the prevailing situation as also to register our protest against unscrupulous use of administrative, police and election machinery by the ruling Congress to procure for them victory in elections, has decided along with other constituents of the Left Front and the Forward Bloc to boycott the rigged Assembly. This boycotting of the Assembly does not in any case mean that we have abandoned parliamentary politics for good. The bourgeois Press in general and some Congress and CPI leaders in particular, just to cook up pleas for further fascistic attacks on left democratic parties, are motivatedly carrying on the slanderous propaganda that the left parties are "going underground and preparing for an armed insurrection." This is nonsense. Though the elections in West Bengal had been entirely rigged, reducing elections to a farce and destroying to a very great extent democratic atmosphere, we still hold that the democratic phase of struggle and consequent necessity of participating in parliamentary politics is not yet over. It is the ruling Congress party that is smothering democracy and bringing in fascism. The left democratic parties are not destroying parliamentary democracy. On the contrary, our Party and we hope, other left parties as well will unitedly strive their best for the restoration of normal democratic atmosphere in West Bengal, acting as responsible democratic opposition even remaining outside this rigged legislature.

The Prime Minister of India, the Chief Minister of West Bengal and the bourgeois Press all have

joined the chorus in denouncing the constituents of the Left Front and the Forward Bloc for their decision to boycott the present West Bengal Legislative Assembly. According to them it is a very wrong decision. But why is it wrong? Does not our democratic right include our right to boycott a rigged Assembly? If the ruling Congress party had made unscrupulous use of administrative, police and election machinery to procure for them, victory in elections in utter violation of all democratic norms and principles and election laws of the land, if the ruling party backed by brute majority in legislature is determined to smother democracy and annihilate all opposition views and organisations, if opposition parties are not treated with the respect they deserve in parliamentary democracy and are not allowed to carry on political activities freely inside and outside the legislature and if administrative neutrality is not restored at all levels upto the lowest level of Thana then is it not meaningless to participate in the Legislative Assembly? It is precisely for this reason that we have decided to boycott the Assembly now.

We contend that the elections in West Bengal had been entirely rigged. The ruling Congress contends that the elections had been absolutely free and fair. It is for our people to carefully examine and judge who is correct and who is not. But if the contention of the ruling Congress is assumed to be true then it means that voters this time wanted that the Congress should rule the state without any opposition and the few seats the left democratic parties had won had been due to mistake on the part of voters. By boycotting the Legislative Assembly we are only rectifying that mistake of the people so to say! Is n't it? Be that as it may, we think that even by remaining outside the

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Income Rising, Work-Load on Employees Increasing, Still Railways are in the Red

The Railways are the biggest State undertaking and perhaps the worst in our country. Railway Minister, Mr. Hanumanthaiya, in the railway budget gave a brief review of the financial position of the Indian Railways. He has this time spared the third class passengers but not before warning them that he would raise additional Rs. 48 crores by increasing third class fares perhaps next year.

Truly speaking, he has not altogether spared the third class passengers. The holders of third class non-suburban monthly season tickets will have to pay 25 paise more per ticket upto Rs. 5.50 paise more per ticket between Rs. 5 and Rs. 10.75 paise more per ticket above Rs. 10 but upto Rs. 15 and Re. 1 more per ticket more than Rs. 15.

Despite all sorts of promises and claims by the Railway Minister, third class passengers are to move in sub-human conditions—hundreds of such passengers, men, women and children are squeezed in like sardines. The compartments are without door and windows subjecting the passengers to the fury of nature. There is no guarantee that trains will start punctually and reach their destinations in time. Nevertheless fares are constantly on the increase. But in return passengers are not getting any extra comfort; rather, travelling condition is deteriorating.

Had there been efficient administration, there would have been no need for fare increase. The number of passengers travelling by the railways has increased from 1284 millions in 1950-51 to 2431 millions in 1970-71. Average rate of fare per passenger per km has increased from 1.48 paise to 2.56 paise, third class mail fare having been increased from 1.88 paise to 2.92 paise. Goods traffic has increased from 44,117 million tonne-kms to 1,28,248 million tonne-kms during the corresponding period. Average rate of freight per

tonne-km has increased from 3.16 paise in 1950-51 to 5.57 paise in 1971-72. There is no doubt that the growth in traffic in goods and passengers is tremendous.

It is true that number of staff have increased but not proportionately. The staff has increased from 9 lakhs to 135 lakhs. But staff input per 1000 traffic units (tonne-km plus passenger-km per year) has decreased from 8.2 in 1950-51 to 5.4 in 1969-70. Open line staff per million km was 3144 in 1950-51 as against 2762 in 1969-70. Staff per million tonne km was 5.65 in 1950-51 while it was 3.41 in 1969-70. Traffic units moved per employee on the open line 1950-51 to 186 in 1970-71.

All these facts establish that work-load on the employees has increased. It is not denied that a portion of this increase in per capita output has been possible due to improvement of equipment. But it is an undeniable fact that work-load on the employees has increased. If the increase in wages is taken into account, it will be seen that increase in wages is not commensurate with the increase in work-load; the wage is lagging behind. Hence, the bad financial position of the railway cannot be explained by the increase in wages of the employees. The real reason lies elsewhere. The Railway Minister has stated that thefts of equipments, over-head wires, cables, carriage fittings and pilferage of goods cost the Railways Rs. 13 crores last year. In addition, further loss of about Rs. 25 crores per annum is caused due to

ticketless travel. No doubt, these are to be checked. But is it not a fact that all these things are going on with the active backing of a section of railway officials? Is it not a fact that many big men in the railway bureaucracy in return of the services rendered by them to the big

monopoly Houses at the cost of Railways have been provided with services by the latter after their retirement from services? Is the Railway Minister ready to sack corrupt big officers? If he can then he will see that the Railways will not be in the red.

Victory of Cong (R) no Victory of Democracy

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legislature in the prevailing situation we shall be in a position to play the role of democratic opposition and strive for establishment of freedom of political activities of left and democratic parties and restoration of normal democratic atmosphere and of administrative neutrality at all levels upto the lowest level of Thana in the state. This will be good for genuine cause of the people and their democratic mass movements.

We urge upon the people to realize the gravity of the situation. The question is not whether the left democratic parties have won or lost in the elections. The question involves a far greater issue. The way the ruling Congress had unscrupulously misused the administrative, police and election machinery to come to governmental power is fraught with serious consequences. The day may not be far off when the administration and the police will dictate which party will rule the country and accordingly prepare a stage-show of so-called elections, as they have done this time at the order of the Congress, to install in governmental power their chosen party. And that party may be not the ruling Congress but some other extreme right reactionary party. Think what the condition of the people will then be. It should also be realized that social indifference to such attacks on democratic norms and principles, as had been made by

the ruling Congress Party in connivance with the administration and the police in the matter of last general elections in West Bengal, and blockade of reasonings create favourable conditions for the growth and development of fascism. The destruction of democracy by the ruling party should not, therefore, go unprotested. By boycotting the Assembly, we are registering that protest.

The 'victory' of the Congress in the elections in West Bengal is no victory of democratic and progressive forces in our country. It is no victory of the people either, as the leaders of the ruling Congress and the CPI are claiming. It is, on the contrary, a victory of reactionary forces falsely masquerading as progressives under the smoke-screen of so-called radical utterances. Fascists everywhere adopt this tactic to conceal their real character, hoodwink the masses, enlist popular support behind them by bamboozling the people and carry out fascist plans and programmes. Symptoms of administrative fascism are fast developing in our country. It is no time for rejoice, indifference or inaction. It is rather high time that our people should stand united and prepare themselves for organised sustained movements for restoration of democracy. Their determination, vigilance and organised efforts alone can prevent fascism from appearing with all its horrors. We urge upon the people to act accordingly.